AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

1-49. (Canceled)

50. (Withdrawn) A method of creating a continuous ablation lesion in heart tissue, comprising the steps of:

providing a first ablating section and a second ablating section, the first and second ablating sections each having an end and an ablating element;

positioning the first and second ablating sections in contact with the epicardium;

wrapping the first and second ablating sections around at least one vessel;

interlocking the first and second sections to form a closed loop around the at least one vessel.

51. (Withdrawn) A method of creating a continuous lesion in tissue, comprising the steps of:

providing an ablating device having an ablating element;

positioning the ablating device in contact with the epicardium;

ablating tissue to create a first lesion;

moving the ablating device to a location adjacent the first lesion;

ablating tissue with the ablating element to create a second lesion which is continuous with the first lesion.

52. (Withdrawn) A method of creating a lesion from an epicardial location, comprising the steps of:

providing a first device and a second device slidably coupled to the first device, at least one of the first and second devices having an ablating element;

introducing the first and second devices into the pericardial space;

ablating tissue to form a first lesion with the ablating element;

moving at least one of the first and second devices relative to the other; and

forming a second lesion after the moving step.

53. (Withdrawn) A method of ablating cardiac tissue, comprising the steps of:

providing an ablating device having an ablating element and a suction well, the suction well being coupled to a suction line which is coupled to a vacuum source, the ablating device also having means for determining when the suction well is adhered to the epicardium;

positioning the ablating device against the patient's epicardium;

adhering the ablating device to the epicardium with the suction well; and

ablating tissue with the ablating element after the adhering step.

54. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 53, wherein:

the providing step is carried out with the determining means being a sensor selected from the group of sensors consisting of a flow rate sensor, a pressure sensor and an electric circuit.

55-82. (Canceled)

83. (Previously presented) A device, comprising:

an elongate body adapted to temporarily mechanically couple to a tissue surface and having an end, the elongate body having at least one ablating element; and

at least one suction well that surrounds a perimeter of the at least one ablating element,

wherein a closed wall defined by an inner lip of the at least one suction well surrounds the perimeter of the at least one ablating element.

84. (Previously presented) The device of claim 83, wherein the elongate body has a plurality of ablating elements and a plurality of suction wells, and wherein each of the plurality of suction wells surrounds at least one of the plurality of ablating elements.

85. (Previously presented) The device of claim 84, wherein the plurality of suction wells are coupled to a suction lumen.

86. (Previously presented) The device of claim 85, wherein the suction lumen is formed by a tube attached to the body.

87. (Previously presented) The device of claim 86, wherein a fluid outlet is coupled to the suction lumen.

88. (Previously presented) The device of claim 84 further comprising a first suction lumen coupled to a first fraction of the plurality of suction wells and a second suction lumen coupled to a second fraction of the plurality of suction wells.

89. (Previously presented) The device of claim 83, wherein the at least one suction well is formed between the inner lip and an outer lip.

90. (Previously presented) The device of claim 89, further comprising

at least one fluid chamber, wherein the inner lip forms a boundary between the at least one fluid chamber and the at least one suction well; and

a fluid inlet and a fluid outlet, the fluid inlet and the fluid outlet being adapted to pass a fluid into and out of the at least one fluid chamber.

91. (Previously presented) The device of claim 94, further comprising a pressure sensor positioned along the suction lumen, the pressure sensor adapted to detect a change in pressure to determine the adequacy of contact of the suction well to a tissue.

92. (Previously presented) The device of claim 94, further comprising a flow rate sensor positioned along the suction lumen, the flow rate sensor adapted to detect a change in a flow rate of a fluid to determine the adequacy of contact of the suction well to a tissue.

93. (Previously presented) The device of claim 94, further comprising an electric circuit positioned along the suction lumen, the electric circuit adapted to detect electrical conduction to determine the adequacy of contact of the suction well to a tissue.

94. (Previously presented) The device of claim 83, wherein the at least one suction well further comprises a suction port coupled to a suction lumen.

95. (Previously presented) The device of claim 94, wherein a cross section of the suction port is less than or equal to about 10% of a cross-section of the suction lumen.

96. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 83, wherein the at least one ablating element comprises one of a radiofrequency ablating element and an ultrasound ablating element.

97. (New) A device according to claim 83, wherein the at least one ablating element comprises one of a microwave ablating element, an optical ablating element, a cryogenic ablating element, and a heated ablating element.

98. (Canceled)

99. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 83, wherein the elongate body comprises between two and 15 individual ablating elements, and further comprising a temperature sensor coupled to at least one of the individual ablating elements,

wherein an individual suction well surrounds each of the individual ablating elements, and each individual suction well has an inner perimeter wall and an outer perimeter wall configured to retain at least one of a fluid and a vacuum within the individual suction well.

100. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 99, wherein the individual ablating elements comprise one of a radiofrequency ablating element, an ultrasound ablating element, and a cryogenic ablating element.

101. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 99, wherein the fluid comprises a conductive solution.

102. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 101 wherein the individual ablating elements comprise radiofrequency ablating elements that are mechanically coupled to adjacent ablating elements by at least one flexible hinge member, and wherein the fluid comprises one of an isotonic saline solution and a hypertonic saline solution.

103. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 93, wherein the electric circuit comprises a pair of wires positioned on opposite sides of the suction lumen.

104. (Previously presented) A device, comprising:

an elongate body adapted to be temporarily mechanically coupled to a tissue surface and having an end, the elongate body incorporating at least one ablating element therein; and

a continuous suction well surrounding the at least one ablating element, said continuous suction well having opposing side walls, the opposing side walls being an inner side wall and an outer side wall, each opposing side wall having substantially co-planar end portions adapted to continuously contact the tissue surface.

105. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 104 wherein a major face of the at least one ablating element is recessed relative to the co-planar end portions thereby defining a fluid chamber between the end portions of the inner side wall, the major face of the at least one ablating element, and the tissue surface.

106. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 105 further comprising a pair of fluid lumens each having a terminal end and wherein each said terminal end couples to the fluid chamber.

107. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 106 wherein the at least one ablating element comprises a radiofrequency ablating element.

108. (Previously presented) A device according to claim 107 further comprising a source of fluid coupled to the pair of fluid lumens and wherein said source of fluid further comprises a saline solution.

109. (Canceled)